

# Environmental Health

## Forest Napavine Road & Jackson Highway Well Contamination - Chehalis, WA

### **HEALTH CONSULTATION FINDINGS:** **None of the residents who were exposed to contaminated well water would be expected to experience harmful health effects.**

#### **Fact Sheet Purpose**

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has completed a health consultation to identify potential health risks from exposure to contaminants found in residential wells located near Forest Napavine Road and Jackson Highway in Chehalis. This fact sheet summarizes the conclusions and recommendations reported in the health consultation.

Many of the wells in the immediate vicinity have been tested for contamination. The Lewis County Health Department (LCHD), in cooperation with DOH, will continue to test wells in the area of concern. If you live in this area, you may be contacted by LCHD for water testing. Your cooperation will help to ensure a thorough investigation of the extent of contamination. Once tested, DOH or LCHD is available to explain your sampling results and any related health concerns.

#### **What is a Health Consultation?**

A health consultation is an evaluation of information to determine whether human exposure to chemicals found in the environment might cause harmful health effects. To do that, a health advisor evaluates the following information—looking at past, present and future exposures:

- what chemical(s) a person is exposed to;
- the amount of chemical a person is exposed to;
- how a person is exposed—by breathing, ingesting, or skin contact;

- how long a person is exposed, and;
- size and physical characteristics of the person who is exposed to the chemical.

Once an evaluation is complete, the health consultation provides recommendations to reduce or stop harmful chemical exposures.

#### **Site Background**

In 1998, contamination was found at levels of concern in well water at the Lewis County Central Maintenance Shop, located near Forest Napavine Road and Jackson Highway in Chehalis. At the request of Lewis County, DOH prepared a health consultation to evaluate the health risk for shop employees. Since shop well water has not been consumed in the last 15 years, no public health hazard was present. Shop employees continue to drink bottled water at work. You can request a copy of the health consultation by calling toll free 1-877-485-7316.

Since contamination was first detected in the Central Shop well, 21 residential wells near the site have also been tested. Results from five of these wells indicated a minimal level of contamination. However, one well had contaminants at a level of health concern.

#### **Chemicals of Concern**

In April 2000, three chemicals were found at levels of concern in one residential well. The chemicals were:

- 1,1 dichloroethylene (1,1-DCE);
- trichloroethylene (TCE); and,
- tetrachloroethylene (PCE).

These chemicals are man-made solvents most often used to clean metal parts or for dry cleaning clothes.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that they are possible cancer-causing chemicals. Exposure to low levels over a very long time could increase the risk for cancer. However, it's important to note that this health information about health effects most often comes from animal studies and workplace environments—where exposures are much higher than what has been found in this community.

## Health Evaluation

***None of the residents who were exposed to contaminated well water would be expected to experience harmful health effects.***

Residents who used water from the well that has the highest levels of contamination were only exposed for a short period of time (six months). They are now receiving bottled water until a long-term solution is put into place. (If these residents had been exposed to this contamination for a longer period of time (greater than 30 years), there would be a small increased cancer risk.)

The level of contamination found in the other five residential wells were within acceptable levels for public water supplies. These wells will continue to be tested to make sure the contamination is not increasing over time.

## Recommendations & Actions

1. The resident whose well water is contaminated at levels of health concern should not consume water from that well until contamination levels are lower, a water treatment system is used, or an alternate water supply is in place.
2. DOH will continue to evaluate sampling results from wells in the area of concern.
3. Residents will continue to receive information about agency activities and findings.

## For More Information

DOH or LCHD can be contacted to answer questions about area well water contamination. Both agencies are working together to determine the extent of the contamination.

A public meeting was held July 13, 2000. If you missed that meeting and would like to be included on the mailing list, call the Lewis County Health Department at 360-740-1222.

DOH's final health consultation will be available by October. To request a copy, call DOH's toll free number.

### Contacts:

Washington Department of Health  
**Paul Marchant, toll free 1-877-485-7316**  
[www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/oehas/default.htm)

Lewis County Health Department  
**Toll free 1-800-562-6130 or 740-1223**

